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Manuscripts & Folklife Archives
 Department of Library Special Collections
 Western Kentucky University
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Descriptive Inventory

MSS 69 ROWAN Family

½ box. 10 folders. 159 items. 1784-1923. Originals, holographic copies, typescripts.

2010.27.27

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

John Rowan, Sr., son of William and Sara Elizabeth (Cooper) Rowan, was born in York County, Pennsylvania, on 12 July 1773. Following the Revolutionary War and the loss of the family fortune, William emigrated with his family to Kentucky to begin anew on land he had purchased before leaving Pennsylvania. After a journey of five months, the Rowans arrived at Louisville in March 1783. The next spring, the Rowans and five other families established a settlement at the Long Falls of Green River.

A few years later, the Rowan family moved to Bardstown, where seventeen-year-old John entered Salem Academy, which was headed by the distinguished educator, Dr. John Priestly. Some of John's classmates, who later became widely known in their respective professional fields, were Archibald Cameron, Felix Grundy, John Pope, John Allen, John Simpson, and Joseph Hamilton Daviess. Rowan proved to be a remarkable student, possibly the best classical scholar of his day in Kentucky. Upon completion of his work under Dr. Priestly, John studied law in Lexington and was admitted to the bar in 1795, thus beginning his long and outstanding career as a lawyer and politician.

Rowan married Ann Lytle (1774-1849) about 1794, and they settled on a thirteen-hundred-acre tract of land east of Bardstown which became known as Federal Hill. It was transferred to John by his father-in-law. John and Ann were the parents of nine children (See Chart, B1,1,#2).

In 1804, Rowan was appointed as Kentucky's Secretary of State and served until 1806, when he was elected to Congress as the Bardstown District's representative. After his congressional term expired, he returned to Federal Hill and continued to practice law until 1813. Rowan served in the state legislature from 1813 to 1817 as Nelson County's representative, after which he accepted the appointment as judge of the Court of Appeals in 1819, serving for one year. About 1822, the Rowan family moved to Louisville, but continued to spend part of each year at Federal Hill. Shortly thereafter, Rowan was elected to two terms in the state legislature representing Jefferson and Oldham counties. Winning a seat in the U.S. Senate in 1824, Rowan served from 1825 to 1831. Returning to Kentucky, he practiced law until his appointment as Commissioner of Mexican Claims in 1839. He served also as the first president

of the Kentucky Historical Society from 1838 until his death. Death came to Rowan on 13 July 1843; he was buried at Federal Hill.

John Rowan, Jr., whose parents were John, Sr. and Ann (Lytle) Rowan, was born at Frankfort, Kentucky, on 9 February 1807. He received his education in Nelson County; at Nashville, Tennessee, under Dr. Priestly; at St. Joseph's College in Bardstown; studied law at Lexington; and earned his law degree from Transylvania University in 1832. Rowan, Jr., moved to Louisville and had a law practice there for a few years. In 1835, he married Rebecca B. Carnes (1813-1897) of Baltimore, Maryland. Following their marriage, they moved to a Mississippi plantation, residing there only a short period of time before moving to Federal Hill. John never practiced law again full-time, but turned his attention to managing the family farm, at which he was not very successful. They were the parents of ten children (See Chart, B1,#3). John, Jr., was the only son to survive his father, and he was given Federal Hill as his share of the estate. On 3 January 1848, he received an appointment, which he had actively sought, as *charge d'affaires* to the Kingdom of Two Sicilies. John, Jr., and his family, arrived in Naples on 29 June 1848, and resided there during his one-year term of service. Following his stay in Naples, he and his family returned to Federal Hill, where he died on 16 August 1855.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

- Armstrong, J. M. & Co. *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Kentucky of the Dead and Living*
- Gresham, John M. comp. *Biographical Cyclopedia of the Commonwealth of Kentucky*, 1896.
- Levin, H., ed. *Lawyers and Lawmakers of Kentucky*, 1896.
- Nelson County Census Records, 1860. (microfilm)
- Richards, Frances. *John Rowan*, unpublished master's thesis, Indiana University, 1930.
- Smith, Sara Borders. *Historic Nelson County*, 1971.
- Tinsley, Harry D. *History of No Creek, Ohio County, Kentucky*, 1953, pp. 118-120.

COLLECTION NOTE

The materials of and relating to John Rowan, Sr., constitute about one-third of the total number in the collection. The items are chiefly letters of Rowan to his son John, Jr. There are four letters of Rowan, Sr., that are holographic copies made by his granddaughter, Madge Rowan Frost in 1908, which originally were written to his wife, daughter, son, and to the brother of a deceased daughter's husband.

Correspondence comprises most of John, Jr.'s materials. Included are letters to his wife, letters to him and his wife, business letters, and legal papers relating to his position as *charge d'affaires* to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

The collection is organized chronologically around people and events.

SHELF LIST

BOX 1	ROWAN Family	1784-1923	112 items
Folder 1	Inventory; biographical information and genealogical charts		10 items
Folder 2	John Rowan, Sr. – Letters to members of his family (copies)	1808; 1818; 1842	2 items
	2a Typescript copies of letters		5 items
Folder 3	John Rowan, Sr. – Correspondence	1836-1841	15 items
	3a Letters to his son, John, Jr.	1836-1841	12 items
	3b Letter to his wife	1841	1 item
	3c Incoming letters to John, Sr.	1837; 1841	2 items
Folder 4	John Rowan, Sr. – Business papers and speech	1833-1843	4 items
Folder 5	John Rowan, Sr. – Legal paper pertaining to the settlement of his estate and paper written about him	1843(?); 1852	2 items
Folder 6	John Rowan, Jr. – Correspondence	1833(?)-1855	20 items
	6a Letters to his wife	1833(?)-1853	6 items
	6b Incoming letters to John, Jr. and his wife	1835-1855	14 items
Folder 7	John Rowan, Jr. – Incoming letters, etc.	1848-1850	11 items
Folder 8	J. W. Schaumburg – Papers relating to his army restoration claim	1836-1852	4 items
Folder 9	John Rowan, Jr. – Business and legal papers	1845-1852	36 items
	9a Printed items	1845-1848	5 items

Folder 10	Newspaper clippings, etc.	1848(?) - 1923	6 items
C1-D1, #18	Survey and letter	1784; 1849	2 items
	1 Letter – John M. Clayton of the U.S. Dept. of State to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies	June 1, 1849	1 item
	2 Jefferson County survey	May 4, 1784	1 item

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

MSS ROWAN Family 1784-1923
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Correspondence, business and legal papers, clippings, etc., of John Rowan, Sr., 1773-1843, lawyer, judge, U.S. Representative and Senator, and owner of Federal Hill, Bardstown, Kentucky; and of John Rowan, Jr., 1807-1855, master of Federal Hill and U.S. *charge d'affaires* to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, 1848-1850.

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Chinn, Thomas Wither, 1791-1852 B1,F9
Cholera – Bardstown, 1833 B1,F6a
Cholera – Cincinnati, Ohio, 1849 B1,6b
Clay, Henry, 1777-1852 – Comments about, 1841 B1,F3c
Clayton, John Middleton, 1796-1856 B1,F9
Diplomatic service, 1847-1853 B1,F6,7,9
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Federal Hill – Restoration of, 1840 B1,F4
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SEE or SEE ALSO

The Kingdom of Two Sicillies

See:

Sicily

My Old Kentucky Home

See:

Federal Hill

Rowan, Eliza Cooper

See:

Harney, Eliza Cooper (Rowan)

Rowan, Mary Jane

See:

Steele, Mary Jane (Rowan)

Women

See also:

Wives – Attitude towards